

OUTDOORS WRITER

Old Hickory, Percy Priest also a Mecca for anglers

Reservoir, tributary impoundment have been known to hold large number of fish

Owen Schroeder

When we talk about fishing, most local anglers think of Kentucky and Barkley Lakes. The Twin Lakes provide some of the best freshwater fishing to be found in the United States, but we maybe overlooking two other nearby reservoirs, according to recent reports from the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency.

Outdoors

Owen Schroeder, assistant director of Murray State University's Breathitt Veterinary Center, has been writing for The Leaf-Chronicle about hunting and fishing since 1976. His column runs on Sundays and Thursdays.



Old Hickory Lake is a main stream reservoir on the Cumberland River, while Percy Priest is a tributary impoundment on the Stones River. Both lakes are in the Nashville area and they hold good populations of bass, crappie and striped bass, making them among the most popular fishing destinations in the state.

"Old Hickory provided the second number of trips and angling effort among Tennessee's reservoirs in 2005, while Percy Priest ranked third," said Todd St. John, TWRA fisheries biologist. "Largemouth bass fishing was the most popular fishing in both reservoirs."

St. John said bass tournaments were a major factor in the fishing activity at the two lakes.

"Largemouth bass abundance has remained high and consistent with recent years, and the excellent population size structure provides for high angler catch and harvest rates," he said.

Old Hickory has a high population abundance of gizzard and threadfin shad as a food source for the bass and other game fish species.

While the abundant food source may make it difficult at times to catch bass, it does, however, result in an excellent condition for the fish and the opportunity for anglers to catch quality fish.

Old Hickory is also noted for its excellent striped bass fishery and trophy sized fish in the 50- to 60-pound range are frequently caught.

"Increased stocking rates to approximately 10 striped bass per acre have resulted in higher angler catch and usage statistics in recent years," St. John said. "The targeted angler effort, and trips for striped bass were the highest among Tennessee reservoirs in 2005."

St. John said 214,020 striped bass, along with 36,058 black nose crappie, 65,830 sauger, and 254,921 walleye were stocked in Old Hickory in 2005.

The good largemouth and smallmouth fishing at Percy Priest attracts many bass anglers and there were at least 471 bass tournaments on the large reservoir in 2005.

"Largemouth bass abundance has remained high, as determined by electrofishing, and it has remained consistent with recent years," St. John said.

Crappie fishing is also popular at Percy Priest.

"Crappie fishing in recent years has been good to excellent and it was the second most popular fishery in Percy Priest in 2005," St. John said. "The 2001 and 2003 year-classes will continue to provide a good fishery through 2006."

The fishing habitat at Percy Priest was improved in 2005 with the addition of spawning benches to help smallmouth bass reproduction; shoreline stabilization to add better fish cover; and the addition of 10 new fish attractors to help crappie and other species.

The lake was also stocked with 49,793 Cherokee bass (striped/white bass hybrids), along with 57,624 striped bass and 22,230 smallmouth bass.

Originally published August 17, 2006 in the Clarksville, Tenn., Leaf Chronicle